

## HALIBUT FISHERY.

The halibut fishery in Alaskan waters is next in importance to the salmon industry. Although some may regard the salmon industry as having reached that mark beyond which further progress under present conditions may not be particularly great, it is certain that the halibut fishery has by no means approached the maximum of its productivity. Some of the banks in British Columbia waters which for years have yielded a rich return of halibut are beginning to show signs of depletion. It is therefore to waters contiguous to the Alaskan coast that efforts must be directed chiefly in further expansions of the industry. The total production of halibut from Pacific waters northward from Oregon to Alaska in 1915 was approximately 65,000,000 pounds, whereas the banks of the Atlantic produced less than 5,000,000 pounds. On account of the reluctance of fishermen to state definitely the locality from which halibut are taken, because the spreading of such information would invite competition, it is difficult to obtain exact statistics regarding the proportions of the catch from the several regions concerned on the Pacific coast. It is believed, however, that a conservative estimate would place the catch of halibut along the Alaskan coast both in extra-territorial and intra-territorial waters at approximately 40 per cent of the total, or expressed in figures a total of more than 25,000,000 pounds in the year 1915. The customs records, however, show only about 15,000,000 pounds of halibut passing through Alaskan ports. This is substantially the amount which is credited to Alaska in the statistical tables appearing elsewhere in this report.

The halibut industry in Alaska is centered chiefly at Ketchikan where

there are two large fish-freezing plants, namely, those of the New England Fish Co., and the Ketchikan Cold Storage Co. The first mentioned is the largest in Alaska. The latter concern was new to Alaska in 1915. Other companies having cold-storage facilities and engaging in the halibut industry in an important way were the Booth Fisheries Co., at Sitka; Juneau Cold Storage Co., at Juneau; Taku Canning & Cold Storage Co., at Taku Harbor; and the Glacier Fish Co., which operated a floating cold-storage plant on the barge Glory of the Seas. This concern has heretofore been designated as the Glacier Fisheries Co. It did not, however, send the Glory of the Seas into Alaskan waters in 1914, although the vessel was operated at Idaho Inlet in 1913. In addition to the freezing of halibut, this concern, as well as other companies, made shipments of fresh halibut on the regular lines of steamers plying between ports of Alaska and Puget Sound. Many of the halibut schooners taking fish on the banks off the coast of Alaska proceeded directly to Puget Sound or to ports in British Columbia to land their catch.

The opinion expressed by the Bureau several years ago that the opening of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway to Prince Rupert, British Columbia, would probably divert a considerable portion of the halibut trade from American ports was fully confirmed by developments in 1915. Prince Rupert is located only 90 miles from Ketchikan and unless means are adopted to hold the trade it is undoubtedly true that Prince Rupert will draw a large proportion of the halibut trade now enjoyed by American communities. From an American point of view the importance of the situation may be seen from the fact that during the year 1914 no halibut were landed by American fishing vessels at Prince Rupert, but beginning in March, 1915, and continuing through to the end of the year American vessels landed more than

7,000,000 pounds of halibut at that port while Canadian vessels landed about 8,000,000 pounds there. It is reported that approximately 80 per cent of the fish caught by Canadian vessels were shipped to American markets. All the American caught fish landed at Prince Rupert were shipped in bond to American markets, chiefly to the important distributing centers for halibut at Boston and other eastern cities.

The Dominion Government has taken active steps to develop the halibut industry of British Columbia, and chiefly that of Prince Rupert, by an order-in-council which was issued on March 9, 1915, as follows:

"During the present calendar year foreigners or foreign corporations bringing fresh fish in vessels registered in the United States of America to any port in British Columbia shall be permitted to land such fresh fish at such port without payment of duties and transship the same in bond to any port in the United States, or to sell such fish in bond to such local dealers or dealer as may be properly and duly licensed therefor, under the regulations and conditions in compliance with the bonding requirements (without the right, however, in either instance, to sell in Canada for consumption therein, or otherwise except in bond, any of such fresh fish so landed); and such foreigners and foreign corporations bringing fresh fish in vessels registered in the United States of America to any port in British Columbia, shall be permitted to purchase supplies, and ship crews for such vessels, at any port in the said province of British Columbia, the whole under such regulations and conditions as the Minister of Customs may determine."

By the terms of this order Canada is enabled to receive the benefits of the American fishing industry but the markets for American caught halibut landed at Prince Rupert or other Canadian ports have not been enlarged, as the use of such fish so landed by American vessels is prohibited in Canada. Various inducements have been held out by the authorities at Prince Rupert to cause American vessels to land their cargoes at that port and to outfit for fishing operations and buy all supplies there. The object thus sought has in considerable measure been accomplished in 1915 as various American companies have been forced to invest money at

Prince Rupert in order to obtain their proposition of the halibut trade. A number of American companies have made extensive investments at Prince Rupert and others contemplate doing likewise unless measures are taken very soon to cause a retention of the halibut industry in American ports as was the case before the opening of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway to Prince Rupert.

There is apparently nothing in the present laws or regulations of the United States extending sufficient authority to cope adequately with the situation. Plans are therefore being formulated for the enactment of legislation by Congress to give the necessary protection to the American halibut fishery and particularly to retain for American ports the trade which they formerly enjoyed and which is now seriously threatened and will undoubtedly be lost very largely to Prince Rupert and other Canadian towns. It is not only the loss of trade that American towns will suffer, which of itself is of sufficient importance to cause real concern, but it is the more important loss of citizens to Alaska who will make their homes in Prince Rupert rather than in towns of southeastern Alaska, notably Ketchikan. This is a loss which Alaska should not be forced to sustain, and unless something is done soon to remedy the situation it will be a distinct setback to the development of that territory.

The situation is peculiar in that undoubtedly means can be devised whereby not only will the trade be retained to southeast Alaska but at the same time Prince Rupert may continue to enjoy in considerable measure the benefits of the industry and particularly the Grand Trunk Railway can have the benefit of as much freight traffic as though the fish were landed exclusively in Canada. A simple means of accomplishing this seems to lie in merely requiring that before halibut taken from the waters of the



Pacific may be shipped in bond to the United States through Canada they must first be landed at an American port. The adoption of this plan would likely result in the establishment of what might be termed a ferry service between Prince Rupert and Ketchikan. The cost of this probably would be borne largely by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, but it does not seem to be a matter of great expense. In fact, it is probable that the establishment of such a service would prove profitable to the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that under the remedy just suggested, shipments of halibut to the eastern markets over this railway would continue to be as heavy as under present conditions.

Another subject to which some attention has been given in the latter months of 1915 is in respect to the establishment of a close season for the taking of halibut in Pacific waters. This matter has been advocated by fishing interests and it is anticipated that in the near future steps will be taken to accomplish something definite along this line.

#### STATISTICAL SUMMARY.

The investment in the halibut fishery in Alaska in 1915 amounted to \$2,842,800, which is a slight increase over the investment of \$2,744,055 in 1914. The number of persons engaged in 1915 was 1,455, while in 1914 it was 1,406. There has also been an increase in the product which in 1915 totalled 15,417,789 pounds, valued at \$781,011, as against 14,807,797, pounds, valued at \$762,757 in 1914. These figures are based in considerable measure upon the returns made through the customs service. The product shown in the table which follows does not include catches made in extra-territorial waters of Alaska which were taken by the fishing vessels directly to Puget Sound or to Canadian ports.

# INVESTMENT IN THE ALASKA HALIBUT FISHERIES IN 1915.

Items.	Number.	Value.
Fishing vessels, steamer and power	140	\$1,682,000
Tonnage	4,070	-----
Outfit	----	610,000
Dories	480	28,800
Fishing apparatus	---	80,000
Shore and fixed property	---	442,000
Total	-----	2,842,800

# PERSONS ENGAGED IN THE ALASKA HALIBUT FISHERIES IN 1915.

Races.	Number.
Whites	1,420
Natives	35
Total	1,455

# PRODUCTS OF ALASKA HALIBUT FISHERIES IN 1915.

Products.	Pounds	Value.
Halibut:		
Fresh	9,747,634	\$533,898
Frozen	5,589,864	244,423
Fletched	80,291	2,690
Total	15,417,789	781,011

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The halibut industry in Alaska is centered <sup>chiefly</sup> at Ketchikan where there are two large fish-freezing plants, namely, those of the New England Fish Co., and the Ketchikan Cold Storage Co. The first <sup>mentioned</sup> ~~named~~ is the largest

in Alaska. The latter concern was new to Alaska in 1915. - Other companies having cold-storage facilities and engaging in the halibut industry in an important way <sup>were</sup> ~~have been~~ the Booth Fisheries Co., at ~~Saxtix~~ Sitka; ~~the~~ Juneau Cold Storage Co., at Juneau; Taku Canning & Cold Storage Co., at Taku Harbor; and the Glacier Fish Co., which operated a floating cold-storage plant on the barge Glory of the Seas. This concern ~~has~~ heretofore been designated as the Glacier Fisheries Co. It did not, however, send the Glory of the Seas into Alaskan waters in 1914, although <sup>the vessel</sup> ~~it~~ was operated at Idaho Inlet in 1913. In addition to the freezing of halibut this <sup>concern,</sup> ~~company,~~ as well as others <sup>companies</sup> ~~of less importance,~~ made shipments of fresh halibut on the regular lines of steamers plying between ports of Alaska and Puget Sound. Many of the halibut schooners taking fish on the banks off the coast of Alaska proceeded directly to Puget Sound or to ports in British Columbia to land their catch.

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approximately 80 per cent of the fish caught by Canadian vessels were shipped to American markets. All the American caught fish landed at Prince Rupert were shipped in bond to American markets, chiefly <sup>to</sup> the important distributing centers ~~for~~ halibut at Boston and other eastern cities. <sup>H</sup> The Dominion Government has taken active steps to develop the ~~hali~~ halibut industry of British Columbia, and chiefly that of Prince Rupert, by an order-in-council which was issued on March 9, 1915, as follows:

Copy order.

By the terms of this order Canada <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ enabled to receive the benefits of the American fishing industry but the markets for American caught halibut landed at Prince Rupert or other Canadian ports have not been enlarged, as the use of such fish <sup>so</sup> ~~landed~~ by American vessels is prohibited in Canada. Various inducements have been held out by the authorities at Prince Rupert to cause American vessels to land their cargoes at that port and to outfit for fishing operations and buy all supplies there. The object <sup>thus</sup> ~~six~~ sought ~~xxxxxx~~ has in considerable measure been accomplished in 1915 as various American companies have been forced to invest money ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> Prince Rupert in order to obtain their proportion of the halibut trade. A number of American companies have made extensive investments at Prince Rupert and others contemplate doing likewise unless measures are taken <sup>very soon</sup> to cause a ~~retention~~ of the halibut industry in American ports ~~xxxxxxx~~ as was the case before the opening of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway to Prince Rupert. <sup>H</sup> There is apparently nothing in the present laws or regulations of the United States extending sufficient authority to cope adequately with the situation. Plans are therefore being formulated for the enactment of legislation by Congress to give the necessary pro-



tection to the American halibut fishery and particularly to retain for American ports the trade which they formerly enjoyed and which is now seriously threatened and will undoubtedly be lost very largely to Prince Rupert and other Canadian towns. It is not only the loss of trade <sup>that</sup> which American towns will suffer, which of itself is of sufficient importance to cause real concern, but it is the more important loss of citizens to Alaska who will make their homes in Prince Rupert rather than in towns of southeastern Alaska, notably Ketchikan. This is a loss which Alaska should not be forced to sustain, and unless something is done soon to remedy the situation it will be a distinct setback to the development of that territory. ¶ The situation is peculiar in that undoubtedly means can be devised whereby not only <sup>will</sup> ~~can~~ the trade be retained to southeast Alaska but at the same time Prince Rupert may continue to enjoy <sup>in considerable measure</sup> ~~very largely~~ the benefits of the industry and particularly the Grand Trunk Railway can have the benefit <sup>of</sup> ~~as~~ as much freight traffic as though the <sup>fish</sup> ~~trade~~ were <sup>landed</sup> ~~lost~~ <sup>exclusively in Canada.</sup> entirely to Alaska. A simple means <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ accomplish this seems to lie in merely requiring that before halibut taken from the waters of the Pacific may be shipped in bond to the United States through Canada they must first be landed at an American port. The adoption of this plan would <sup>likely</sup> ~~probably~~ result in the establishment of what might be termed a ferry service between Prince Rupert and Ketchikan. The cost of this probably would ~~be~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~considerable~~ ~~measure~~ <sup>largely</sup> borne <sup>by</sup> the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, but <sup>it</sup> ~~this~~ does not seem to be a matter of great expense. In fact, it is probable that the establishment of such a service would prove profitable to the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. <sup>under the remedy just suggested,</sup> Emphasis is laid upon the fact that ~~all of the halibut shipments of halibut to the eastern markets over this railway would continue landed by American vessels under present conditions would be shipped east to be as heavy as under present conditions.~~

# Investment in the Alaska Halibut Fisheries in 1915

Items.	Number.	Value.
Fishing vessels, steam and power - - - - -	140	* 1,682,000
Tonnage - - - - -	4,070	- - - - -
Outfit - - - - -	- - -	610,000
Stores - - - - -	480	28,800
Fishing apparatus - - - - -	- - -	80,000
Shore and fixed property - - - - -	- - -	442,000
Total - - - - -	- - -	2,842,800

## Persons Employed in the Alaska Halibut Fisheries in 1915.

Races.	Number.
Whites - - - - -	14 20
Natives - - - - -	35
Total - - - - -	1,455